

An Appraisal of Nigeria's Counterterrorism Measures against Boko Haram

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Abstract

Nigeria's responses to the upsurge of Boko Haram attacks in the country's Northern region were mostly considered to be militaristic, aiming for the swift elimination of the group, its threats, its members and restoration of the dwindling peace since 2009. The intense resurgence of Boko Haram attacks in 2011 and its fierce resistance against the security operatives in the Northeast region was among the factors that prompted the Nigerian government to adopt offensive and defensive counterterrorism measures that are being implemented through various military and non military operations. Therefore the paper aims at appraising the effectiveness of Nigeria's offensive counterterrorism against Boko Haram. It will explore the challenges experienced in the process of the operations. It is premised on the assumptions of Sandler and Enders' (2004) *Modern Economic Game Theory* which analyses policy options and recommendations with respect to countering transnational terrorism. Methodologically, the paper relies on primary and secondary sources of data collection, which is presented and analysed qualitatively. The paper found out that, although counterterrorism involves both defensive and offensive measures, Nigeria relies heavily on offensive military operations, and have recorded reasonable number of successes such as the recapture of Boko Haram's occupied territories and restoration of peace in most of the affected states in Northeast. Lack of political will, distrust, corruption and human rights violations are found to be among the challenges confronted. The paper however, recommends that there is the urgent need for Nigeria to design a comprehensive counterterrorism policy that will incorporate both the socioeconomic, political, community, and military measures altogether.

Key Concepts: Boko Haram, Terrorism, and Counterterrorism

Introduction

Nigeria as a state is faced with the most serious unconventional threat of terrorism in its entire history. No one can oppose that the tragedy of Boko Haram warrants its proscription as emergency by the Nigerian state. The epoch of insecurity that bedevilled country's existence as a sovereign entity since 2009 has equally being met with series of regulatory measures in forms of counterterrorism. Officially, Boko Haram is called "*Jama`at Ahl-as-sunna Li-adda`await wa al- Jihad*" an Arabic phrase which can be translated to mean Association of Sunnis [adherents to the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad S.W.A] for the Propagation of Islam and for Holy War. The group is based in Nigeria and it is an internationally designated terrorist group. It seeks to rigorously enforce Islamic Sharia and establish an Islamic state particularly in its strongholds in Northern Nigeria through violent means (Campbell, 2013, Guidere, 2012).

However, the offensive military measures being implemented by the Nigerian Government to greater extent had reduced the scourge and widespread of Boko Haram attacks to the frontier of Sambisa forest and Lake Chad area. Calmness and normalcy has been restored in areas where hitherto under the control of the terrorist group. The group capability is technically weakened. It is equally important to note that, Boko Haram as a militant group has endured resiliently to counter manoeuvre the changes in tactics and

strategies of the Nigeria's military. It has resorted to diverse forms of asymmetries which at some points proved difficult to be defeated by Nigeria.

It is at this point the paper intends find out the effectiveness of the military oriented (offensive measures) counterterrorism approach adopted by the Nigerian state in fighting Boko Haram by highlighting its major achievements and challenges and work towards providing a better view points as on how to address them. It is on this that the paper premised itself within the theoretical underpinnings of modern economic game theory to counterterrorism. Methodologically, the paper uses both primary and secondary sources of data collections.

Henceforth, counterterrorism has been a top priority for Nigeria. Although before 2011, Nigerian government had not competently considered the activities of the group as terrorism, but rather a mere temporary security issue that can be handled by regular police measures. With the resurgence of Boko Haram's violent campaign in 2011 and the deterioration of security and order particularly in Borno state and spread of its attacks into other states across Northern part of the country, the Nigerian government hence found it necessary to take decisive measures though militaristic in nature in order to restore the dwindling peace and order in the region before the situation get out of hand.

The imposition and application of these varying security measures have resuscitated the arousal of the debates that capture the grievances of those affected. For instance, emergency rule had given the security forces the power to act decisively and deal with anybody who tries to disobey the stipulated rules and regulations. The derogation of certain constitutional provisions had further empowered the security operatives to implement the wide range of counterterrorism operations that aimed at subduing the Boko Haram's capability and contain its spate of indiscriminate attacks. but in turn it is marred by a number of challenges ranging from serious allegations of violations of human rights, law morale of soldiers in the war theatre due to inadequate financial incentives, logistics, heavy weaponries and long and overdue staying; distrust within the military and with public, poor coordination with other security agencies; and weak level of cooperation with neighbouring countries.

The paper is divided into four main sections. Section one covers the introduction, section two dwells on conceptual expositions on terrorism and counterterrorism; and modern economic game theory. Also section three provides the detail overview on Nigeria's

counterterrorism measures and military operations against Boko Haram. Finally section four covers recommendations and conclusion.

Conceptual Exposition on Terrorism and Counterterrorism

One cannot talk about counterterrorism without highlighting the conceptual significance of the concept of terrorism. The term elusively suffers from absence of internationally agreed definition and that is why it is seen as vague concept. This tendency is inherently extended to its opposite concept of counterterrorism. Despite of this problem however, it is imperative to firstly explore the possibility of finding a reconciliatory ground upon which the paper can develop a framework that can guide its analytical exposition of the two opposite concepts.

According to Anti-Terrorism Prevention Law (2011) section (1) subsection (2c)(i-iii), terrorism includes attacks upon a person's life which may cause bodily harm or death, kidnappings, as well as the destruction of government facilities or private properties in a manner likely to endanger human life or result in a major economic loss. Some other acts of terrorism highlighted in the Act are propagation and dissemination of information in any form calculated to cause panic, evoke violence, or intimidate a government, person or group of persons. The Act also addresses issues such as kidnapping, hijacking of aircraft, ships, or other means of public transport, as well as the manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply, or use of weapons and explosives (Ekundayo, *Punch*, January 24, 2012).

Terrorism is a unique form of political violence, a political campaign backed by threats and acts of violence. It must be systematic and deliberate; it seeks to influence a wide audience by generating fear. Primarily it targets civilians to gain political control of the public. Other forms of political violence include attacks against infrastructure (sabotage), against political leaders (assassination), against military (guerrilla warfare), and genocide (ethnic cleansing). Although attacks against civilians (so-called soft targets) are the most common in the initial wave of terrorist operations, subsequently terrorist groups develop the capability to attack security forces (hard targets). Today, about 45 percent of all attacks staged by terrorist groups are against security forces personnel (Steven and Gunaratna, 2004: 4).

One important area about the above argument is the believe that, as a form of political violence, an act of terrorism must be systematic; in essence it should be gradual process which requires well designed game plan before execution. As a means to an end, it process must be continuous in as much as the truce is not reach with the opponent in question (i.e. between Nigerian government and Boko Haram fighters), or in a case one side defeated the

other. It is should be deliberate in the sense that, there must be a designated target, the intensity and the desire to generate fear into the minds of the public. Boko Haram is also known for carrying-out specifically three of the above forms of political violence; however, it does not squarely aim at ethnic cleansing. Although, it does target Christians and their places of worship, but such attacks are meant to target specific ethnic group in Nigeria. Boko Haram is not primarily targeting civilians, but rather targets those who are openly criticizing its mission. However, it also some times carries indiscriminate attacks which often involve many civilian casualties especially in schools, motor parks and market places.

The group is using violent or forceful strategies in carrying out its various attacks which include suicide attacks, open fire confrontation, road side detonation of Improvised Explosive Devices (IDEs) and abduction of people whose areas or communities were attacked. Although most of what the group is clamouring is connected with religion but its primary purpose is political in nature. That is to abolish any law its perceived and declared contradictory to the teaching of Islam, and to seize control of Nigerian territory and incorporate it into its predetermined and declared Caliphate.

On the contrary, counterterrorism is defined as “a form of security which involves both *defensive measures* which states use to minimize vulnerability to terrorist acts, and *offensive measures* to contain, deter, and respond violently to terrorism, in complementary with any contingency measures such as emergencies that have the ability to respond to terrorist attacks and limit their space of operations” (Steven and Gunaratna, 2004:102).

From the above counterterrorism is viewed as a combination of defensive and offensive measures to deal with the problem of terrorism on one hand, and that of the terrorists on the other hand. Usually, defensive measures are preventive; and are employed as domestic law enforcement measures and which attract little complains of human rights violations. While offensive measures are usually militaristic in nature, where terrorism is considered as an act of warfare and that terrorists are designated as foes to the nation. Here there is minimal consideration for human rights and the rule of law.

However, the reemergence of international terrorism on a grand scale after September 11, 2001 had caused democracies and the international community to mobilize new policy toolboxes at their disposal suitable to face such threat. In the past few years, the response has consisted of panoply of policies and specific measures of different origin and content which

are described, increasingly, as ‘counterterrorism’. The conciseness of the term barely hides its underlying complexity; and heterogeneous nature (Bianchi and Keller, 2008). Thus, counterterrorism in essence includes laws, policies, tactics and techniques used to fight terrorism at the national and international level.

Hence, counterterrorism measures are usually designed by respective governments like Nigeria as they relate to the context and nature of their laws in an effort to curb the menace of terrorism and curtail its consequences. By looking at these two types of counterterrorism policy (offensive and defensive measures), Sandler elaborated that offensive measures are usually proactive designed purposely to target terrorists and their supporters with the sole aim of weakening the terrorists’ operational capabilities, subsequently minimizing the number of their attacks and eventually lead to their complete defeat (Sandler, 2005:75). Whereas, defensive measures, seemed to be very preventive as they are designed to protect potential targets and seek to reduce the amount of casualties which can be resulted by an attack (ibid).

However, Gani and Mathew (2008) stated that, the forms of legal responses against terrorism can broadly be divided into two categories: (a) the *regulation* of terrorism and terrorist activities; and (b) the *amelioration* of counter-terrorism measures.

The *regulation of terrorism* comprises those measures relating to the prevention, investigation and punishment of all acts define as terrorism. It encompasses the development and application of new legal standards and systematic procedures to aid in identifying persons engaged in terrorist acts or acts preparatory to them, and in investigating and prosecuting, or rendering them harmless. It also involves measures to protect infrastructure and particular forms of social activity from terrorist attacks, or at least to attempt to reduce the risk of such acts, to minimise their impact, and to be ready to cope with the aftermath of terrorist attacks.

The *ameliorative* category however, comprises measures that involve efforts to moderate or restrain the excesses of the regulatory measures referred to above, from a number of perspectives, including:

- From a human rights or rule of law perspective (challenging many of the measures as unjustifiable limitations on the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms);

- From a regulatory impact perspective (resisting the additional burden in terms of red tape/regulatory impact and additional expense that counter-terrorism laws and policies may impose);
- From an instrumentalist and pragmatic perspective (questioning whether the measures are likely to be effective in reducing the threat of terrorism); and
- From other perspectives such as the broader political perspective of questioning whether the allocation of public and private resources to counterterrorism and security measures is justifiable in the light of other equally or more pressing social problems.

The above two categories relatively addressed the scope within which this study will look at what entails in Nigeria's counterterrorism. The *regulative* measures are important because they defined the responsibility of Nigerian state in relation to countering Boko Haram's threats on its security, territorial integrity and sovereignty, whereas, the ameliorative ones provided the study with the relevant framework that limit the conduct of the state towards its imposition of the first category. However for the purpose of this research, the regulation category will be viewed from the first perspective of the second category. Although other perspectives may still be useful, however they are less significant to the context of the research problem.

Cunningham (2003) however, developed four predominant models on how terrorism is perceived in relation to drafting counter-terrorism measures: (i) a crime that should be handled by law enforcement and the judicial system; (ii) a form of warfare best suited for a military response; (iii) a liberation struggle conducted by oppressed minority, political or religious groups whose desires for self-determination or power should be accommodated; and (iv) a violent reaction to a complex set of socio-economic, political, cultural and possibly religious variables that have both long term preconditions and short term precipitant causes that need to be addressed with a multifaceted intervention to eliminate underlying causes and cycles of violence. He however clarifies that, the first two models deal with terrorism as a criminal or military problem and often is the approaches of governmental counterterrorist policies. The third model assumes identification with the terrorists and those who seek to change the status quo. By contrast, the first two models seek to maintain the status quo. The fourth model reflects an understanding of the political and socio-economic variables that interact to create the complexity of political violence and terrorism (ibid).

Modern Economic Game Theory

This theory was used by Sandler and Enders (2004) in explaining how States can develop an appropriate strategy while analyzing policy options and recommendations with respect to countering national or transnational terrorism. Even when there is absence of precise theoretical framework, the authors corroborated that economic methods can provide important policy insights through strategic interaction (Sandler and Enders, 2004). According to the theory, government should always conduct costs and benefits analysis to determine whether a stated counterterrorism policy will achieve its intended consequences. The authors also consider terrorists to behave and act rationally who often strive to maximize expected utility (or net payoffs) from the consumption of basic commodities created from their terrorist and non-terrorist activities (ibid). Hence, the “price” terrorists have to pay in order to employ their tactics is anticipated to differ based on security measures taken by the government.

Henceforth, policy makers are recommended to take substitution effects into account in order to realize the goal of its counterterrorism policy (ibid). For instance, the relative success of state of emergency measures imposed in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in the North East Nigeria in terms of minimizing the number of Boko Haram attacks may lead to an increase of their attacks in other states not affected by the emergency rules. As such, government policies aimed at a single type of terrorist event adversely shift its relative price, resulting in a substitution for less expensive modes of attack (ibid).

In their final analysis the authors concluded that, to smartly address any possible substitutions and complementarities, States can use three-prong strategies: *one* governments should make the terrorists substitute into less harmful events, *two* governments must go after the terrorists’ resource endowments including the group’s finances, leadership and members, and *three* the government must simultaneously target a wide range of terrorist attack modes, so that the overall rise in the prices of terrorist attacks becomes analogous to a decrease in resources (ibid). In other words, raising the price for all modes of terrorist attacks would influence terrorists to shift into non-violent actions to air their grievances. Although the author confessed that assessing counterterrorism strategies are very difficult by using game theory, however acknowledging the dynamics of terrorists’ tactics and their rational foresight had given the government another tough time to measure the result of its strategies.

Counterterrorism measures and Military operations against Boko Haram

- The Joint Task Force (JTF), formation and its operational transformations

Since the inception of Boko Haram violence in 2009, Nigerian government has addressed it as a security problem. However, the government responded to Boko Haram crisis in many ways. Initially, it considered the violence as temporary security problem, similar to previous experiences across Nigeria, which could be solved through traditional police measures. Unfortunately, the crisis persisted despite the engagement of the military (Umar, 2013: 38). Consequently, on 12 June 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Borno state mandated to restore law and order to the North Eastern part of the country with emphasis on Borno State. It comprises personnel from the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police (NP), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA). The JTF commander was chosen from the military, due to its dominance in the operation (Amnesty International, 2012).

The security operations carried out by the JTF in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States in the northeast region were considered as not only stability operations but as violent crackdowns on the sect members and sympathizers. The Nigeria Police (NP) is primarily responsible for the maintenance of domestic law and order, the Armed Forces constitutionally mandated to aid in civil authority by assisting the police in the maintenance of law and order, but they are only to be called upon if the situation was beyond police capability, the Nigeria Immigration Service is responsible for immigration issues, while the DSS and DIA charged with the responsibility of intelligence gathering (Umar, 2013).

- The Imposition of State of Emergency Measure

In January 2012, President Goodluck Jonathan declared state of emergency rule in 15 Local Government Areas across four states. They include: Maiduguri Metropolitan, Gamboru Ngala, Banki Bama, Biu and Jere LGAs in Borno state; Jos North, Jos South, Barikin-Ladi and Riyom in Plateau state; Damaturu, Geidam, Potiskum, Buniyadi, Gujba, and Gasau-Bade in Yobe state; and Suleja in Niger state (Amnesty International, 2012, 8). Under section 45, chapter 4 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, a state of emergency permits the president to confer additional powers to “duly authorized persons” or make any other order “necessary or expedient for the purpose of maintaining and securing peace, public order, public safety and good governance in the emergency area” (Emergency Power Act, 2012: Sec.I.15), and to derogate from particular sections of Nigeria’s constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 1999).

Among the provisions are the detention of suspects; the taking of possession or control of any property in the emergency area; the entry and search of any premises; and the payment of compensation and remuneration to people affected by the order. The state of emergency had a six months' time limit under the Constitution (if not renewed by the National Assembly) which elapsed at the end of June 2012. The National Assembly did not renew the declaration, and the President officially recognized the end of the state emergency and the cessation of application of the Emergency Powers Regulations on 18 July 2012 (Amnesty International, 2012).

- Overview of Nigeria's Military Operations against Boko Haram: Success and Challenges

The military operations conducted by the defunct JTF still remain the same (though with certain modifications due to change of tactics and strategies of the terrorists and the shift in the operational capability of the operatives). They are conventionally field military operations but in the course of fighting Boko Haram they were condensed under other code names suiting the time and period under consideration.

The primary responsibility of JTF is to subdue the terrorists through offensive military crackdowns against Boko Haram. The JTF actions were mostly aimed at limiting the operating space for the sect and eliminating or arresting members of the group and their supporters. The strategies designed by the JTF are military-oriented operations which include roadblocks, checkpoints, arrests, cordon and search. It also involves guarding of key points, surveillance, protection of very important persons and offensive military raids among others (Amnesty International, 2012).

Below are the code names of all the military operations since 2011 and some of their successes and challenges:

I. Operation Restore Order I, II, and III

The first Joint Task Force operation aimed at the Boko Haram terrorists was codenamed Operation Restore Order I. It was established on June 12, 2011. Later in the year, Operation Restore Order II and III were launched to provide security against Boko Haram in Bauchi and Yobe states respectively (Ogbazino, 2015). The mandate of the task force was to restore the deteriorated law and order in the north eastern part of Nigeria and Borno State in particular. The task force was composed of a force of 3,872 personnel drawn from the Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigerian Police Force, Department of State Security, Nigerian

Customs Service, Nigeria Immigration Service and Defence Intelligence Agency (Obada, 2013:17).

According to Musa (2012a) the composition and mandate of the task force lie in the endemic problems of command and control, logistics, welfare and the inherent danger of fighting in built-up areas, or what is often referred to in the military as urban warfare or operations. It is more than likely that the Nigerian Army's first major encounter with urban warfare at home was in the Niger Delta, South East kidnapping saga and then Maiduguri and some states of north eastern Nigeria. This is because, initially, it was obvious that the military and security agencies were unprepared to tackle contemporary security challenges, particularly terrorism.

However, the military improved on their previous strategy and tactics, partly because training in the Nigerian Army in particular was redesigned and fashioned to combat new emerging security challenges. They were efforts aimed at training and retraining in the Nigerian Army on anti- and counter- terrorism, special reconnaissance, information operation, management and training of personnel and associated equipment in close quarter combat, urban warfare, intelligence operation, amphibious operation, demolition and explosive breaching, tactical communication and civil-military relations were on the increase. Moreover, the act of restoring law and order in trouble spots in itself is part of a training period for the participating troops.

The case of Borno was particularly difficult and compounded by so many factors, including religious and cultural. Some of the terrorists hid in mosques, planted Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by the sides of the mosques or inside churches, hid on rooftops, planted IEDs on routes they knew were used by the military, and shot through loopholes. They clearly seemed to be conscious of the military vehicle columns and exhibited dexterity at flame throwing. They also had Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), General Purpose Machine Guns and Alexander Kalashnikov (AK 47) rifles in their inventory. Boko Haram insurgents also made use of buildings as they provided them with good sniping posts, while alleys, refuse dumps and sand filled streets were ideal for booby-traps. The nature of Maiduguri houses built close to each other with strong gates, tall walls serves as a parapet for the terrorists and a fort onto itself.

However, this challenge was overcome when the JTF began to approach the targeted areas from all flanks. The JTF then understood that it needed to "mouse hole" through each or most of the houses suspected of harbouring Boko Haram terrorists and rooted them out in close combat. This yielded results. Many obvious (because they were caught with weapons)

and suspected terrorists were arrested and thousands of assorted ammunition and some arms and quantities of IEDs were recovered. According to a military personnel in the northeast, “Our saving grace lies on the organization, quality and discipline of our troops. Despite obvious danger, troops remain solid, organised and nationalistic” (Musa, 2012b: 3).

Operation Restore Order I, II and III respectively, however have achieved relative progress. The JTF made attempts at restoring normalcy and building confidence in the populace and checked, monitored and controlled the influx of illegal immigrants. To an extent, the operation made Maiduguri and its environs untenable for the Boko Haram terrorists who then sort refuge in the Sambisa forest where they coordinated attacks. The JTF also were able to destroy some identified Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) production factories and recovered arms. Large cache of arms and ammunitions were also recovered from the Boko Haram terrorists (Obada, 2013). In spite of these efforts, security situations continued to deteriorate as Boko Haram terrorists sustained their reign of terror in the north-eastern part of Nigeria.

This gave birth to Operation BOYONA after the establishment of 7 Infantry Military Division in Maiduguri. This new division of the Nigerian Army was on August 19, 2013 taken over control of the federal government’s drive against Boko Haram from the debunked JTF.

II. Operation BOYONA

Following the continued escalation of violence and wanton destruction of lives and property in the north eastern part of the country by the Boko Haram, the Nigerian Government declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states on May 14, 2013. Consequently, the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Ola Sa’ad Ibrahim, was directed to restore law and order in the affected states. According to the Defence Headquarters, the creation of BOYONA is in line with the plans laid out for the conduct of the operations to execute the mandate spelt out in the State of Emergency declaration by the President Goodluck Jonathan (*Premium Times*, August 19, 2013).

The phase of the operation being concluded on [August 19, 2013] was executed by a Joint Task Force composed by troops drawn from the Services of the Armed Forces as well as other security agencies who conducted Operation BOYONA,... henceforth, only the Nigerian Army will be solely in charge of the anti-terrorism operations in the three states, while the defense headquarters will provide routine guidance (*Premium Times*, August 19, 2013).

A General Officer Commanding (GOC), in the rank of Major General was appointed to command the new Division with its Headquarters in Maiduguri. The GOC took over the Command and the assets of the Headquarters of the Joint Task Force. The new Division is however to continue with the conduct of counter-terrorists operations in the North East which comes under its area of responsibility (ibid).

In line with the directives, troops made up of men of the Armed Forces, the Police and other security agencies were deployed under operation BOYONA to secure the nation's borders and assert the territorial integrity of the nation (Abdul, 2013). The acronym BOYONA stands for Borno, Yobe, Nasarawa and Adamawa Operation. BOYONA was initially conceived to deal with the deteriorating security situation in these states but was retained for the operation in the 3 states affected by the emergency rule. One of the operational mandates of the president to Defence Headquarters under operation BOYONA was to destroy terrorist camps/bases, fish out perpetrators and bring them to justice (ibid). The mandate was substantially achieved with the destruction of terrorists' strongholds and bases mostly located in the desert borders of Chad and Niger Republics. Some of the destroyed/secured camps included: Hausari, Marte, Chikun and Gudu among others in Northern Borno (ibid). The biggest camp of the Boko Haram located in the dreaded Sambisa forest in Southern part of Borno State was cordoned by Special Forces. The military-civilians relations were improved and consequently the revelatory information from the populace regarding the terrorists was of enormous importance as the operatives' cordon and search yielded efforts in returning normalcy to the areas. Defence Headquarters Assessment teams who visited the states observed increased commercial activities as banks, markets and other public places were opened after operation BOYONA was launched (ibid).

III. Operation Zaman Lafiya

Operation BOYONA was later renamed Operation Zaman Lafiya. It was organized and structured in the form of close support Command. Although this does not provide for unity of Command, it however provided for control of the mission area by mutual cooperation and coordination between the services (Ogbazino, 2015). The Logistic Support situations in operation Zaman Lafiya was far from ideal. The Army component of the JTF, which had been in the mission area since 2011, lacked almost all logistic items (ibid). These operations have recorded some successes in terms of arrest of Boko Haram leaders, seizure and retrieval of weapons and general destruction of bases as stated earlier. These successes however, were limited compared to what should have been achieved through joint or

combined operations. Upon his appointment as Chief of Army Staff in July, 2015, Major General Tukur Buratai, at the 103 Battalion Nigerian Army based in Konduga, Borno State announced that operation Zaman Lafiya has been changed to Lafiya Dole, meaning ‘Peace by Force’(Osakwe and Audu, 2017: 3-4).

IV. Operation Lafiya Dole (Deep Punch I and II)

This operation was aimed at clearance the remnants of Boko Haram terrorists within Sambisa forest and Lake Chad basin general area by launching offensive operations on suspected hideouts of the group members, and sometimes by ambushing those attempting to escape. This was possibly successful due to the adoptions of tactical military strategies. The Air Task Force of the operation however, provides air cover for the Land troops during operations. The operations have recorded many successes though many of the Nigerian gallant officers have lost their lives and or injured (Nigerian Defence Headquarters, February 24, 2018).

The operational activities of Operation Lafiya Dole involved offensive, defensive and blocking operations. The defensive operations on the other hand have ensured that the Nigerian troops dominated vital grounds in the entire Theatre of operations. Blocking forces were positioned in specific Named Areas of Interest (NAI) to intercept, block or further neutralise fleeing terrorists from engagement areas. Additionally, Forward Operating Bases (FOBS) are established close to areas with prevalent Boko Haram activities to ensure quick response of the ground troops to such areas (*The Nation*, June 14, 2018).

According to the account of the Nigeria’s Minister of Defence, Mansur Dan Ali from 2016 to 2017 of the operation Lafiya Dole about 30,000 women and children have been rescued from Boko Haram terrorists (*The Nation*, February 6, 2018). Similarly, the operation has also succeeded in dislodging Boko Haram from most of its enclaves and camps within and outside of Sambisa Forest, as a result many of its leader’s lieutenants and other members of the group have been neutralised and killed by the Nigerian military. This led to the recovery of large number of arms and ammunitions, such as AK 47 Rifles and magazines, G3 Rifle magazines, life jackets, light machine guns, metal links, numerous rounds of Anti-Aircraft ammunition, rounds of 7.62mm (NATO) and special ammunitions, 122 millimetre guns, Anti-Aircraft guns, Rocket Propelled Grenades, Grenade Revolvers, Mortar Bombs and other assorted weapons. Other items recovered include motor cycles, Toyota Hilux vehicles, Gas cylinders, varying machines for welding and making of IEDs and other materials (Nigeria Defence, February 24, 2018).

According to Maj.-Gen. Rogers Nicholas, the Theatre Commander, Operation Lafiya

Dole, the Nigerian military has completely defeated Boko Haram.

... Hundreds of insurgents had surrendered and several others fled their enclave while over 100 civilians were rescued. “My soldiers are in the heart of Boko Haram enclave that is ‘Camp Zairo’, the gallant troops have taken total control of Sambisa Forest. “We have broken the heart and soul of Shekau’s group, taking over the camp and its environs. “They are on the run and we are pursuing them to wherever they go. This time around there is no place for escape anywhere. “We had earlier asked those of them that want to surrender to do so and we are still asking them to come out and surrender otherwise they are going to meet it the hard way” (*Daily trust*, February 4, 2018).

Prior to this, the most successful period in the fight against Boko Haram began in February 2015 and continued into October 2016. The involvement of the Civilian Joint Task Force significantly bolstered the military response and towards the end of 2015, the Nigerian security forces had liberated 67 locations, mainly in and around the Sambisa forest, and in Marta and Damboa local government areas in Borno State. According to the Nigerian security forces, only two local government areas were under Boko Haram’s control (Abadam and Mobar, Borno State) by the end of 2015. In December 2015, the Federal Government announced that it had “technically defeated” the group (United Nations, 2017: 3).

As Boko Haram was pushed back, the group reverted to attacks on “soft targets”, including suicide attacks, which increased from 26 in 2014 to 191 in the period from January 2015 to December 2016 in Nigeria. Children were increasingly used in these attacks, which spread from north-eastern Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, where 111 suicide attacks were recorded during the reporting period (United Nations, 2017: 3).

Furthermore, the direct measures taken in the build up to the 2015 elections addressed these issues and more. First, there was a clear mandate, backed by political will and focus to deliver victory to ensure that elections were conducted peacefully in the affected parts of the country; and after the APC government took over, to ensure that the campaign promises of the new government were delivered. Troop morale was boosted with payments made on time, and improvement in logistics and equipment made available in the frontlines including improved air support. Second, following President Buhari’s shuttle diplomacy around the Lake Chad region, there was improved cooperation and coordination amongst the countries in region comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad Republic to jointly fight the Boko Haram terrorists, including a strategic hot pursuit agreement. This greatly reduced the availability of places the group could retreat to, as well as their general mobility in the region. Third, the Nigerian Army went on the offensive, as opposed to the previous approach of reacting and attempting to mount a defence when the terrorists attacked. This facilitated their

driven out of towns and villages they had previously taken over and even saw a crackdown push into their strongholds at Sambisa Forest. Constantly keeping the enemy on the back foot in this manner was crucial in not only winning back territory but in securing them to the point where residents began to return home. Fourth, in this period, a closer working relationship was forged between the military and the Civilian JTF comprising of indigenes whose local knowledge proved to be an invaluable intelligence base and a solid bridge of trust began to appear between residents and the military. The improvement and focus on the welfare of the IDPs in this period also provided another trust building avenue between both the civilian and military efforts to counter Boko Haram (SBM Intelligence Report, August 2017, 22).

In 2016, the Nigerian security forces liberated an additional 119 villages and areas including the two remaining local government areas held by Boko Haram. Reports in this period indicated that Boko Haram elements and their families were surrendering in large numbers to the Nigerian security forces, in part as the result of worsening living conditions. It is estimated that more than 25,000 former Boko Haram captives were also rescued by the Nigerian security forces or escaped between October 2015 and June 2016 (United Nations, 2017: 3).

For instance, in March 2016, the Nigerian security forces and that of Cameroun reportedly separated 11,595 Boko Haram captives in Adamawa and Borno States, in particular along the border with Cameroon under the Multinational Joint Task Force (ibid).

At the conclusion of Operation Lafiya Dole, the Nigerian Army accounted that from January 2017 to May 2018 a total of 122 attacks were carried out by Boko Haram on military locations which resulted the death of 80 Nigerian troops and 171 wounded. It is however 427 Boko Haram terrorists were killed, 53 of their vehicles destroyed, and 492 assorted weapons cutting across AK 47 rifles, FN rifles, GPMG, AMG and RPGS were either recovered or captured, along with 47 Dane guns and 4 x 36 hand grenades (*The Nation*, June 14, 2018).

During the same period, a total of 175 deliberate military Operations against Boko Haram were conducted. In these operations a total of 840 villages were cleared with 371 sect members killed. Similarly, a total of 326 BHT suspects were arrested and 382 surrendered. However, a total of 16 Nigerian troops were killed and 45 others injured, with seven CJTF also killed (*The Nation*, June 14, 2018).

It is pertinent to note that the military campaign against Boko Haram have witnessed the periods of high and lows, though the ongoing operation under Lafiya Dole can be considered close to being the most successful. Part of the key challenges that bedevilled the operational phases of counterterrorism operations from 2011 to 2016 can be counted as: (a)

the morale amongst the troops was low. (b) Welfare and provisions at the frontlines were abysmal. Troops complained of the terrorists possessing superior firepower and many deserted as a result rather than fight the insurgents. The infamous episode where Nigerian troops were said to have “maneuvered tactically” into Cameroon should be recalled. (c) There was very little cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbours in the fight against Boko Haram, with each country surrounding the Lake Chad region either prosecuting the fight on their own or choosing to turn a blind eye to Boko Haram forward bases in their territory in return for Boko Haram refraining from attacks in their territory. (d) Cooperation between the Nigerian Army and the residents of the areas under threat was also negative, with regular reports of human rights abuses on the part of the military. This essentially hampered the ability of the security forces to leverage the local knowledge bank available to gather intelligence and provide early warning on insurgent movements. Many residents reported multiple situations where despite reports of Boko Haram activity, the military response was anything but ineffective, the Chibok Girls abduction as frequently mentioned is a prime example. This distrust was mutual, as the security agents accused some of the residents of providing support and intelligence on troop movements to the terrorists, pointing to instances of well targeted ambush operations by Boko Haram. (e) Multiple announcements by the military of “Killing Shekau” did not help in building trust as well. (f) The politicisation of the insurgency situation by the then opposition APC, and the siege mentality it created in the then ruling PDP, contributed to bad decision making on the part of the sitting government, which translated to the poor performance of troops in the counterterrorism operations in the North East (SBM Intelligence Report, August 2017, 22).

Responding to the questions asked during my interview one junior officer (Lance Corporal) in the frontline corroborated with much of the above concerns. He explains that,

Nigerian soldiers are very good but what we are experiencing in the war front is that all things that soldiers need are not being provided. When you are fighting terrorists but the terrorists that you are fighting are using Anti Aircraft Gun (AA) and we as soldiers, we are using AK47 guns. But it was during 2011 down to 2013 that was the time you can see soldiers running away from Boko Haram because you are fighting somebody that has long hands while you have short hands (Interview, September 3, 2018).

On the issue of welfare he confirms that: “Honestly the welfare is not up to standard. For instance, when we were posted to Arege, we heard from the senior officers that, our allowance for the operation is N5000 per day but instead they are paying us N1000. We spent

two weeks in training but the allowance for that has not been paid too” (Interview, September 3, 2018).

On the general distrust within the soldiers, he narrated that,

There was an arrangement between the Nigerian Army and that of Chad. A combined force were drawn headed by Brigadier General from each country to carry out operation in Tumbu, on their way a directive was given that Nigerian soldiers should withdraw. But our Brigadier General asked us to proceed. As we advanced, we saw an Air force Jet thinking that it was sent for reinforcement and surveillance on Boko Haram positions. What the Jet supposed to do is to bombard the enemy but it drops inside the Nigerian and Chadian soldiers. The Chadian soldiers even threaten that if the Jet drop bomb again they will destroy it. It was later we discover that, it was our General they want kill. That was how we withdrawn back. Had it been we go with such big armaments, we would have recorded huge success against Boko Haram. In fact, the Chadian soldiers are always insulting us that we Nigerian soldiers are the Boko Haram (Interview, September 3, 2018).

We as soldiers we normally discuss within ourselves, we knew that, it is our top men the Generals that don't want the war to finish. They are sabotaging the progress of the army.

On the problem of overdue staying of soldiers in the frontline, the Soldier commented that,

Long staying and over staying is also a problem in Maiduguri. We see some soldiers that were told they will only stay there for six months but they are now there for three years and a half without been posted to another state, but they are only passing them from one place to another within the theatre of war (Interview, September 3, 2018).

When asked about the concerns that the counterterrorism measures have caused human rights violations, Ahmad (Doctor) a member of the Civilian-JTF in Maiduguri revealed that,

It restricted people especially traders in going about their daily businesses because of the imposition of curfew which restricted mobility of people on the streets. But that was not the major concern rather it was compounded by the unrelenting Boko Haram attacks at that time. Usually the attacks by the security operatives on civilians occurred in reaction to Boko Haram attacks. For instance, whenever Boko Haram attacked people in the market after the fled the soldiers then will come and surround the area and conduct search operation. They asked people to rise up their hands, and in that situation if they suspect any form of activity they immediately open fire and shot in that direction indiscriminately without following rules of engagement. As a result some people might have died (April 23, 2018).

Umar Dan Hajiya Baga corroborated that,

I can assure it to you that, the soldiers were the ones who burnt my house in Baga during the first violence [in 2013] in Baga. Let me tell you at that time (in Baga) everybody knows those soldiers were deployed from Mile Post to our area in the

night. From the house of Malam Garba Mai Lambar Mota wayward to Unguwar Kudu was completely set ablaze. Then in the morning, they came back again and started from Bayan Tasha down to the forest was completely burnt to ashes. And as a result many have lost their lives. I can tell you my wife and children spent three days in the forest. Up to today because of that trauma if my children saw soldiers they will start crying (Interview, August 24, 2018).

Responding to the continues outcries on the above challenges, the Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai however, stated that he is aware of the logistics constraints affecting the operations and that the Army will be given protective gear, additional equipment/flat forms, accommodation, welfare and logistics provisioning to those in the frontlines (Combined Second and Third Quarter Conference, September 25, 2018).

One major concern today is that in spite of the obvious degrading of the group's capability to carry out heavy attacks even in Borno State, the remnants of Boko Haram have continued to cause security problems especially in areas of Borno State. To this end, the Nigerian Army has launched "Operation Last Hold" that will last for four months but take effect on the 1st May, 2018. The aim is to contain the group's terrorist activities to the barest minimum and ensure that peace is totally restored in the North East region. According to the narrative of the Chief of Training and Operations of the Army, Major General David Ahmadu, Boko Haram have an adaptive capacity and as a result it has continued to maneuver its way and still engages in attacks on soft targets, suicide bombings and abductions. Therefore it is inevitable for the Army to change operational tactics, techniques and procedures to march the changing trends. The operation is designed to deploy personnel and equipment to showcase the combat efficiency of the Nigerian Army and to totally destroy the group's locations in the Lake Chad basin (*Channels Television*, April 20, 2018).

Conclusion

The resurgence and instant increase in sophistication of Boko Haram's terror attacks across Northern Nigeria had consequently resulted the adoption of offensive counterterrorism measures by the Nigerian government. Boko Haram since its popular uprising in 2009 have remained staunch to its forceful mission of establishing Islamic legal system in Nigeria and abolishment of the current "corrupt" secular state system. Lacking competent persuasion strategy in articulating the interest of the Nigerian Muslims to vow to their call, the group violently resorted to unjustified Jihad (Holy Islamic war) against the Nigerian state (Human Rights Watch, March 14, 2014). The security challenges caused by Boko Haram are of serious note, thus, no responsible government will relent in taking decisive measures to

address them. Arguably, Nigeria in its capacity has a duty to preserve its logical existence which is threatened by the group's violent attacks and its fierce resistance. Essentially, the over reliance on heavy-handed military offensive operations against Boko Haram were considered not only as "stability operation" but as violent crackdowns on the sect members and its supporters.

The primary aims therefore are to subdue the operational capabilities of the group, limit its operating space and ensure its complete elimination. The dynamic nature of Boko Haram attacks and its targets however have compelled the adoption of military-oriented operations by Nigerian security forces. The military have recorded successes in their operations ranging from seizure of the terrorists armaments, killing of their leaders and other members of the group, recapture of most of the seized territories and the pushing of group out of the cities. The capability of the group also is technically subdued. One can argue that, the drastic military campaign against Boko Haram has equally reduced the group from substituting to more harmful events such as kidnappings and collection of ransoms. However, a number of challenges and explained have hampered the final defeat of the group. The associated operational challenges had forced the Army Headquarters into reviewing its strategies and tactics and thereby adopting new changes to meet the increasing tactics of the terrorists as suggested in the theory.

Recommendations

The ongoing military offensive operation against Boko Haram is not the only appropriate solution to halt its activities. Boko Haram's fierce resistance against the Nigerian forces have also exposed the weaknesses in the current counterterrorism operations in Northern Nigeria. While the lives of ordinary people have continued to be trapped, the government is therefore recommended to review its contemporary strategies and adopt wide variety of measures that will assist in solving this protracted problem in all fronts. In essence, a comprehensive counterterrorism approach that will combine both Non-Kinetic and hard military measures is therefore required. Hence there is need for a new approach that will simultaneously address both the symptoms and root causes of Boko Haram terrorism. The fact that Boko Haram continues to resist the offensive crackdowns of the Nigerian security forces and often reemerge stronger have proved that there is default in the operations. And this failure has overwhelmingly discredited the effort of the security forces and lead to

increasing loss of confidence in government` will to fight Boko Haram by Nigerians and international community.

Specifically, government needs to provide adequate motivation and then adequate firepower and manpower. Enough military deployment should be made around the volatile area [who are] well motivated and well kitted. Corruption within the military has to also be taken care off. There is need for checks and balances in the ranks of top military officers to address the allegations of them profiting from the [unending] insurgency. Sometimes people are saying that, they [top ranking officers] want the war against terrorism to prolong, so they will be benefiting from it. Nigerian government has to be proactive in ensuring that strong coordination and cooperation among the security agencies in the country are encourage. The country should show leadership and respect the contribution of the neighbouring countries in fighting Boko Haram by consolidating the achievements of the MJTF.

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